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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7991
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2540
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1868
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5863
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2237
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2007

In Today's Papers

Speculation on Presidency Continues

All papers continue speculating as to whether Prime Minister Erdogan will run for the presidency. On Tuesday, Erdogan will meet with opposition leaders Erkan Mumcu of Anavatan and Mehmet Agar of DYP. The leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet claims Erdogan aims at securing 367 votes for the presidential elections, a number the main opposition CHP claims is required by the constitution to launch the first two rounds of voting in the parliament. Erdogan said so far he met with 300 AKP lawmakers, who, he said, expressed support for any decision the PM will make. Most papers believe Erdogan will announce his candidacy on April 25, the last day for presidential nominations. Cumhuriyet says following the rally of hundreds of thousands in Ankara over the weekend, now secular Turks were preparing to voice new protests message against Erdogan during celebrations planned for April 23, Sovereignty Day, and May 1, Labor Day. Abdullatif Sener, AKP deputy chairman, struck a different note than his party line yesterday, stressing that the opinion of the thousands who have rallied against the PM's presidential aspirations should be taken into consideration.

DYP-Anavatan Consider Unity before Parliamentary Elections

Commentaries in mainstream dailies Milliyet and Vatan claim center-right opposition parties DYP and Anavatan have been holding "secret" talks on unification before the parliamentary elections in November. Former President Suleyman Demirel and former Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz have convinced the two party leaders, Mehmet Agar and Erkan Mumcu, to merge their parties. Milliyet says some groups in Turkey demanding democracy, a market economy and civic liberties might opt for the new formation instead of traditionally supporting the main opposition CHP. DYP has a voter support of around 10 percent while Anavatan is predicted to get 5 percent of the votes.

Erdogan Meets Merkel in Hanover

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan met with German Chancellor

Angela Merkel at the Hanover industrial fair. In a joint press conference with Erdogan, Merkel said Turkey and Europe have to move closer together. "The entire membership process is a long and open-ended one," Merkel said. Erdogan thanked Merkel for "boosting" Turkey's entry negotiations during the German EU presidency, expressing Turkey's expectations of having more chapters opened during Germany's mandate which will expire at the end of June. Erdogan invited Merkel to Turkey, but did not respond to questions from the Turkish journalists on whether he will host Merkel as the prime minister or president.

Meanwhile, Erdogan reportedly presented to Berlin a file on the outlawed PKK's financial sources and its ties with media as well as a list of the terror organization members in Germany. Turkey is expected to ask Germany for the extradition of PKK members, say papers.

Karzai-Musharraf to Meet in Turkey
Mainstream Hurriyet reports the presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf and Hamid Karzai, are scheduled to meet in Ankara on April 29 to reduce tensions between the two countries on fighting Taliban. Karzai accuses Pakistan of sheltering Taliban militants as well as allowing border infiltrations. Turkish officials will join the meeting as well. A spokesman for the Pakistani Foreign Ministry said the offer to host the meeting came from Ankara.

12 Terrorists, 1 Soldier Killed in Clashes
All papers report one Turkish soldier and 12 terrorists were killed in a clash in the eastern province of Tunceli during a military offensive against the outlawed PKK. Security officials predict there are around 350 PKK militants in the province.

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Editorial Commentary: Iraq
Ilter Turkmen writes in the mainstream daily Hurriyet: "From the perspective of international law, Turkey might have three options regarding an intervention: hot pursuit, humanitarian intervention and legitimate defense. Hot pursuit requires a bilateral agreement with Iraq. We used to have such an agreement, but not any more. Regarding humanitarian intervention, there is still a need for definition. By using widely accepted criteria, we can, for instance, claim a right to intervene if a massacre is carried out against the Turkmen population. As for legitimate defense, which is defined by UN Convention (Article 51), Turkey has to inform the UNSC before an operation and describe the measures that it plans to take. However the previous rulings by the International Court of Justice on similar issues indicate that there may not be an automatic grant of such a right to Turkey. Besides as proven by history, asymmetrical clashes can be very difficult for even for the strongest armed forces. Turkey's cross-border operation would probably not be an absolute success due to many reasons, such as the fact that PKK terrorists are spread all around Northern Iraq and the reactions from US and EU. An operation into Northern Iraq requires a solid political ground and calls for rapid military action. Otherwise it would harm Turkey more than it would help.

TV Highlights
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- The Education Ministry has initiated investigation in connection with a traffic accident on the Aksaray-Konya highway that killed 32, most of them primary school students.
- Four people have been killed and five others have been injured in a traffic accident in the southeastern province of Adiyaman.
- Ceremonies will be held Tuesday to commemorate late president Turgut Ozal on the 14th anniversary of his death.
- Deputy Parliament Speaker Ali Dincer remains in critical condition at a hospital in Ankara after cancer treatment and a kidney transplant last December.

International News

- At least 22 people were killed Monday, some of them students, during a shooting at Virginia Tech University.
- Radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr ordered his ministers to quit Iraq's government on Monday in protest against Prime Minister al-Maliki's refusal to set a timetable for US troops to withdraw.
- Le Monde reported Monday French secret services knew before 9/11 al-Qaeda planned to hijack an aircraft in the US.
- Europe does not need a constitution, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, but should opt for a less ambitious new treaty that would not require a referendum.

WILSON